

OBITUARY

J CHASSAR MOIR

CBE, MA, DM, MD, FRCSED, FRCOG

Professor John Chassar Moir, who for many years was Nuffield professor of obstetrics and gynaecology at Oxford, died on 24 November. He was 77.

JCMB writes: The death of Chassar Moir has taken from us one of the most distinguished



and best-loved men in obstetrics and gynaecology in Britain in the twentieth century. Graduating in Edinburgh in 1922, he went first into general practice and was awarded the MD with gold medal in 1930 for his thesis on internal rotation. He then went to University Col-

lege Hospital as first assistant to the obstetric unit under Professor F J Browne. It was while he was there that he happened to observe the unusual potency of a sample of liquid extract of ergot, and with Dudley he set out to investigate this. Together they isolated the new drug ergometrine, which has saved the lives of countless women in labour throughout the world. This is undoubtedly one of the two major contributions to the safe practice of obstetrics in the last 70 years, matched only by Domagk's discovery of sulphanilamide. Moir's demonstration of the effect of ergometrine was recorded on film. With typical glee he used to relate that the whole apparatus cost altogether one shilling; but the demonstration was superb, and could not be bettered by the sophisticated methods of today.

From UCH he went to the newly founded Postgraduate Medical School at Hammersmith Hospital as the first university reader, under Professor James Young, and in 1937 was appointed Nuffield professor of obstetrics and gynaecology at Oxford, where he remained until retirement in 1967. He was appointed CBE in 1961. At Oxford he became interested in the use of diagnostic x rays in obstetrics, developing considerable expertise in x-ray pelvimetry, then in its infancy. He also studied the methods of detection of the placental site by means of x rays. After Munro Kerr's death he took over the authorship of the latter's well-known textbook *Operative Obstetrics*, maintaining the unique narrative style that had characterised the previous edition.

During his years as Nuffield professor at Oxford important contributions were made by members of his department—Scott Russell's work on the effect of oxytocin on isolated uterine muscle strips, and Mostyn Embrey's study on prostaglandins. Moir himself began his outstanding contribution to gynaecological surgery, the repair of vesicovaginal fistulae. His scrupulous attention to detail produced

results in terms of cure which were the admiration and indeed the envy of his colleagues in Britain and throughout the world. In this, as in everything that he did, he was a perfectionist: it was not unknown for him, at the end of a three-hour operation on a fistula, to look at the result and decide to take out every stitch and begin again. His results were so good that other men's failures were increasingly referred to him, and even after his retirement from the chair at Oxford he was in such demand that he returned to Hammersmith as visiting professor to continue this work. Many colleagues and gynaecologists in training both at Oxford and later at Hammersmith have reason to be proud to have worked with him, and to have had the opportunity to learn something of his wizardry. His lectures to postgraduate students were heard with rapt attention. Only recently he gave a memorable and typically modest lecture at the Royal College of Surgeons describing his experiences in dealing with both vesicovaginal fistulae and stress incontinence, for which he had devised the "gauze hammock" operation. His book *The Vesico-Vaginal Fistula* was the standard work on this topic and ran to two editions. So, long after his official "retirement," he worked on, curing women of their misery and teaching his colleagues and juniors the principles of his technique.

W H McMENEMEY

MA, DM, FRCP, FRCPATH, FRCPSYCH, DPM

Professor W H McMenemey, formerly professor of pathology at the Institute of Neurology, and honorary consulting pathologist to the National Hospitals for Nervous Diseases, died on 24 November in the London Hospital. He was 72.

William Henry McMenemey was born on 16 May 1905 and educated at Birkenhead



School; Merton College, Oxford; and St Bartholomew's Hospital. Qualifying in 1929, he held the posts of house physician and junior demonstrator in pathology at his own hospital, subsequently being appointed pathologist to the Napsbury and Shenley psychiatric hospitals at St Albans. Here no doubt his interest was awakened in dementia, the pathology of which was to become a major work many years later. He would recall subsequently with affectionate amusement the vagaries of the personal room service afforded by one of the less severely disturbed patients allotted to him for this purpose. Experience here too helped

Chassar Moir's invaluable contributions to obstetrics and gynaecology received wide acclaim. He was awarded the DM of Oxford University. The hon LLD of Belfast and Hon DSc of Ontario and of Edinburgh, and many other distinctions, came his way. Finally, as illness overtook him in September 1977, he quietly withdrew to his home at Charlbury.

Chassar had a dry and delightful sense of humour. He told the story (against himself) of how during the second world war, while pruning the creeper on his house, he inadvertently pruned the telephone cable as well, thereby securing, to his surprise, several uninterrupted nights at home. When a bus conveying the members of the Gynaecological Visiting Society to view a country house in Galway became stuck under a curving arch, he was heard to say, "What we need is a symphysiotomy"—an operation with which he was not unacquainted. Chassar was a great man and a gentle man; a man who did more than anyone living today to save the lives and relieve the miseries of women. Everyone who knew him had a profound respect and affection for him, and his passing leaves all of us the poorer, though his contributions to medicine and science remain. He is survived by his wife Grace, who so loyally supported him in his last illness, and by two sons and two daughters.

him to acquire the DPM—as he said later, the only British pathologist to hold this qualification. After a registrarship in clinical neurology at Maida Vale hospital he was appointed pathologist to the West End Hospital for Nervous Diseases, moving in 1937 to the Radcliffe Infirmary at Oxford as assistant pathologist.

In 1940 he came to Worcester Royal Infirmary, inheriting the traditional prewar clinical laboratory staffed by a man and a boy. Within a short time he had trained a competent nucleus of skilled technicians and had enlarged the laboratory so that he could begin to offer a comprehensive service in clinical pathology. His was one of the first laboratories to allow open access by family doctors to pathological investigations, and he extended this service by organising outpatient pathological clinics at his own and the smaller hospitals in the district. With the help of local women's organisations he ran an efficient blood transfusion service, which not only supplied local needs but also sent a sizable weekly contribution to the Birmingham blood bank. He did much to persuade local coroners of the advantages of transporting bodies to a properly equipped central mortuary for necropsy, and many older colleagues will remember with amusement an article in the *Lancet* detailing the rigours of conducting a necropsy in midwinter in a farm outbuilding assisted by the local police constable. He helped to found the Vigornian Society to hold regular clinical meetings whose proceedings were enhanced by the attendance

of medical members of the armed Forces, particularly those from a United States unit stationed locally.

During this time he began his work in the organisation and development of the Association of Clinical Pathologists, of which he was secretary from 1943 to 1957 and president in 1958-9. With the help of S C Dyke he built up the association, started by a handful of provincial pathologists, into a flourishing body capable of representing the interests of pathologists at national level. In spite of the academic honours that followed later, many of us would rate this work as his major contribution to pathology. Not long afterwards he was active, with a number of expatriate pathologists who had sought refuge in this country during the war, in founding the International Society for Clinical Pathology. At Worcester, too, came his first contribution to the history of medicine, when as a result of careful personal researches he was able to publish in 1947 *A History of the Worcester Royal Infirmary* to celebrate the bicentenary of that institution. His friendship with the Dyson Perrins family led to an abiding interest in Worcester porcelain.

Elected FRCP in 1948, by 1949 he had decided to devote the remainder of his career to neuropathology and was invited to return to Maida Vale, where he stayed until 1970. Apart from his activities in developing a branch of pathology then in its infancy in Great Britain, his main interests were in the diagnosis of intracranial tumours and the pathology of dementia. He contributed a chapter on this subject to the 1955 and 1963 editions of Greenfield's *Neuropathology*. He also wrote the chapter on diseases of the nervous system for the 1966 *Systemic Pathology* by Wright and Symmers. His historical researches continued. He published *James Parkinson: a Biographical Essay* in 1955 and the *Life and Times of Charles Hastings* in 1959, and he became president of the section of the history of medicine at the Royal Society of Medicine in 1962-4. Other presidencies included that of the British Neurological Society (1957-60) and of the section of neurology of the Royal Society of Medicine and the International Society of Clinical Pathology from 1966 to 1969. His fondness for travel found him a frequent delegate to pathological meetings in the United States and Europe. He was an honorary member of the American Society of Clinical Pathologists and the American Association of Neuropathologists, an honorary fellow of the Royal College of Pathologists of Australia, and an honorary member of learned societies in France, Spain, and Romania. From 1965 to 1970 he was professor of pathology at the Institute of Neurology, which gave him much pleasure.

His modest and unassuming exterior concealed an internal dynamism and an insatiable thirst for knowledge reminiscent in some ways of the versatility of the mediaeval scholar-scientist, and there is no doubt that he could have made his mark in any of the other learned professions. For many years no meeting of the Association of Clinical Pathologists was complete without his slight figure on the platform, always immaculately attired and characteristically wearing a bow tie. He was always an entertaining companion and a witty raconteur of his many experiences at home and abroad. He was renowned for his kindness to his junior medical and technical staff and for his continuing interest in their welfare. Fond of music and gardening, he was quite a

competent pianist, and—lest all his interests be thought to be on a lofty intellectual plane—a former colleague remembers accompanying him to films by the Marx brothers, in whose antics he took great delight. He married Robina Inkster, of Aberdeen, herself a doctor, whose loyal affection and loving care sustained him throughout his career, especially in the latter years marred by recurrent illness. She survives him with their son and daughter.—PK.

S L HIGGS

MA, MB, BCH, FRCS

Mr Sydney Higgs, former orthopaedic surgeon to St Bartholomew's Hospital and to the Royal National Orthopaedic Hospital, died on 21 November. He was 85.

Sydney Limbrey Higgs was born on 12 September 1892, the son of a solicitor. From Whitgift School he went to Cambridge, where at St John's he rowed in the St Margaret first boat, which went head of the river, and so he won his oar. Going on to Barts, he qualified in 1917 and joined the Royal Navy, serving till the end of the war. Completing his junior appointments and a demonstratorship in anatomy, he obtained the FRCS in 1922. After the war he worked at the great Military Orthopaedic Hospital at Shepherd's Bush (Hammersmith Hospital) and its successor, Queen Mary's Hospital, Roehampton. There he came under the inspiring influence of Robert Jones and his brilliant disciples, notably Reginald Cheyne Elmslie, orthopaedic surgeon to St Bartholomew's and surgeon to the Royal National Orthopaedic Hospital. At the former, Higgs became his chief assistant, later assistant orthopaedic surgeon, and finally successor in charge. He also assisted Elmslie, actively encouraged by Sir Robert Jones, in establishing Red Cross orthopaedic and physiotherapy clinics throughout Hertfordshire, open to young and old and visited by himself and others from his two main hospitals; similarly in converting Chailey Heritage from a boarding school for crippled children into an active hospital-school with peripheral clinics, so badly needed in their day. In the second world war much of St Bartholomew's was moved to an emptied mental hospital at St Albans, with important EMS special units, in anticipation of civilian and military casualties. Higgs took charge of the large orthopaedic unit, which gave him opportunity to exert his outstanding organising ability and to apply lessons, too often forgotten, in reconstruction of war wounds that he had learnt at Shepherd's Bush and Roehampton after the first world war. In collaboration with the special plastic and neurosurgical units and others, Higgs and Ivor Robertson did important work on cancellous bone grafting and the place of penicillin in the treatment of wounds. Besides running the unit and teaching students, he served a wide parish as EMS regional orthopaedic consultant and as



consultant orthopaedic surgeon to the Army, Eastern Command.

His opinion, like his teaching, was clear and precise. His operating was precise, adept, and gentle. Foremost among his professional attributes was complete dedication to his patients, with great understanding. They were made to know that they and their affairs were important above all else. He inspired their confidence and friendship—as indeed that of all his staff.

Higgs was blessed with a fine presence; and his tall, spare figure and youthful appearance belied his years. With it went a perfect natural kindness and courtesy without the least suggestion of condescension, affectation, or pomposity. He was a delightful companion and perfect host. Care of his guests, as of his patients, extended to the smallest detail. These qualities, which remained conspicuous until his death, contributed greatly to his presidency in 1950 and 1951 of the British Orthopaedic Association with its characteristic international emphasis. He was a skilful fisher of trout and salmon, but his abiding delight was sailing, and *Lady Margaret* was his pride. He became a member of the Royal Yacht Squadron, and he spent his retirement at West Wittering, on Chichester Harbour. In 1927 he married a war widow with two young children. The union was a very happy one. She died in 1954. He had one daughter of his own, who has shared his zest for sailing, becoming commodore of her yacht club. In his late years he suffered many personal sorrows and deplorable physical health, which he faced most courageously.—HJB.

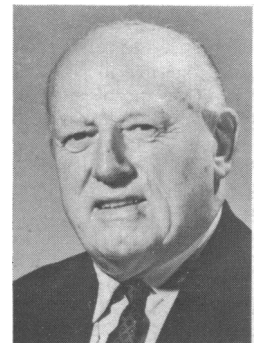
J T RICE-EDWARDS

FRCSed

Mr J T Rice-Edwards, formerly senior consultant surgeon at the Royal Gwent Hospital, Newport, died on 3 November. He was 80.

James Trevor Rice-Edwards was the son of a Rhymney alderman and was educated at Queen's College, Taunton. During the first world war he was commissioned in the South Wales Borderers, saw action on the Somme and at Salonika, and was wounded at Paschendaale. He began his medical education at the Welsh National School of Medicine, Cardiff, before going to St Bartholomew's Hospital, London, and finally to Edinburgh. After several years in general practice at Newport he was appointed an honorary surgeon at the Royal Gwent Hospital, where he remained until his retirement in 1962. These were years of intense activity, and he could rarely be found far from the Royal Gwent Hospital or St Joseph's Nursing Home.

Quite unable to accept the inevitability of compulsory retirement, he spent four years as a supernumerary surgeon at St Lawrence Hospital, Chepstow, where he was engaged in reducing the surgical waiting list. Finally he accepted an appointment in South Africa, working assiduously first at the Jane Furze



Hospital, Transvaal, and then for six years at St Mary's Hospital, Thelmoth, Zululand, performing his final operation in his 80th year. He had been an active member of the Newport and East Monmouthshire Hospital Management Committee from its inception, and was its chairman between 1962 and 1967. He took a keen interest in cancer research and was a regular speaker at local meetings. He was a magistrate and a Rotarian. In his younger days he represented Barts and Middlesex at rugby, and during his practice years any leisure hours were devoted to riding to hounds. Much later in life he interested himself in golf.

As a BMA member he showed chauvinistic enthusiasm that was quite infectious. He was a member of the divisional executive committee, the South Wales Branch Council, the Welsh Committee, and the Welsh Consultants and Specialists Committee, becoming chairman of each in due season. Not unexpectedly he was elected a Fellow of the BMA. A highlight of these activities was his chairmanship of the Monmouthshire Division when the BMA's fifth Annual Clinical Meeting was held at Newport in 1962.

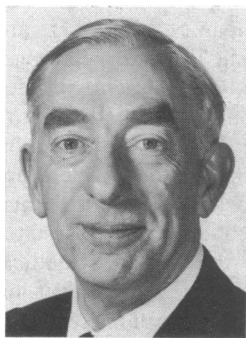
Trevor Rice-Edwards was universally loved and respected in Monmouthshire. Courteous at all times and unswervingly ethical, his whole professional life was coloured by his devotion to and enjoyment of his trade. Always eager to help his medical and nursing colleagues, he was held by them in the very highest esteem. His pleasant smile and tranquil demeanour belied a stubborn determination and doggedness at those times when he was assured of the justice of his cause, and many have had subsequent reason to be grateful for his persistence. The departure of such a tremendous character left an unfillable gap. He is survived by his wife Anne; a son who is a neurosurgeon; and a daughter who has a medical appointment in the Transkei.—BAT.

J H WILKINSON

CBE, PHD, DSC, FRIC, FRCPATH

Professor Henry Wilkinson, who was professor of chemical pathology at Charing Cross Hospital Medical School and consultant chemical pathologist to Charing Cross Hospital, died on 29 November. He was 62.

John Henry Wilkinson qualified as a pharmacist in 1937 and later in chemistry



(1940) and worked for several years for May and Baker. In 1947 he switched his interest to chemical pathology on appointment as lecturer at the Westminster Hospital Medical School, where he remained for 18 years, being appointed reader in 1954. During this period, after the death of his first wife, he met his second wife Dorothy, who was working in the department at the time. Although at first interested in thyroxine metabolism, he began during this period his important work on

clinical enzymology, which soon became his main research. His first book on the subject, a new edition of which has recently appeared, was published in 1962. In 1965 he was appointed to the chair of clinical chemistry in the University of Pennsylvania, where he continued to make important contributions to his chosen subject besides reorganising his new department. In 1969 he returned to the United Kingdom to take up the post at Charing Cross Hospital Medical School which he held until his death.

In 1972 the laboratories of the Fulham Hospital, West London Hospital, and Charing Cross were brought together in the new Charing Cross Hospital. Thanks to Henry Wilkinson's patience and tact, what could have been a trying transition took place with the minimum of difficulties. During his career Henry took a great interest in teaching and supervised many students proceeding to higher degrees. Some of these now occupy senior positions in laboratories all over the world. While at the Cross the American Association of Clinical Chemists made him the "Clinical Chemist of the Year," and he also received the Wellcome award of the Association of Clinical Biochemists and the Gallanti award for clinical enzymology. His services on committees were very much in demand. He sat on the board of governors of Charing Cross Hospital, the council of the Medical School, various committees of London University, and the board of management of the Terence and Matilda Kennedy Institute.

Henry's modesty and charm tended to conceal his immense capability and deep insight into the scientific aspects of his work. However, his achievements in clinical enzymology earned him worldwide recognition, as shown by his appointment as the first president of the International Society for Clinical Enzymology. He was recently appointed CBE. He also served as president of the Association of Clinical Biochemists and of the pathology section of the Royal Society of Medicine. He was frequently invited to lecture in all parts of the world, and always took this part of his duties very seriously. He will be deeply mourned by a wide circle of friends and colleagues. He is survived by his wife Dorothy, who gave him the greatest encouragement in all his activities, and by four sons and one daughter.

Sir ARTHUR BELL

MB, BS, FRCS, FRCOG

Sir Arthur Bell, past president of the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists, died on 24 November. He was 73.

Arthur Capel Herbert Bell was born on 18 September 1904. He was educated at Marlborough College and St Bartholomew's Hospital, where he qualified in 1927. After house appointments at St Bartholomew's and at Liverpool Royal Infirmary he was made obstetric registrar at Charing Cross Hospital and later at Westminster Hospital. He was elected to the staff at Chelsea Hospital for Women and Queen Charlotte's Maternity Hospital at what even then was the unusually early age of 28. He became assistant obstetric surgeon to Westminster Hospital in 1934, later surgeon, and finally senior obstetric surgeon in 1954. He became a fellow of the

Royal College of Surgeons in 1930. A member of the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists in 1932, he was elected a fellow in 1946. He was examiner to the universities of Oxford, London, Glasgow, Belfast, Birmingham, and Durham, also to the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists, the Conjoint Board, the Society of Apothecaries, and the Central Midwives Board. He was made honorary master of midwifery of the Society of Apothecaries and honorary fellow of the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Glasgow.

Arthur Bell was an enthusiastic and popular teacher, both of undergraduates at Westminster and of



postgraduates at the Institute of Obstetrics and Gynaecology, Queen Charlotte's, and Chelsea. His aphorisms were frequently quoted, and he was regularly and affectionately caricatured in the Christmas pantomime at Westminster. Anecdotes,

many of them apocryphal, about him were legion, a sure index of his popularity with his students. His book, *A Pocket Obstetrics*, was the vade-mecum of many generations of students and he was a long-time contributor to *Ten Teachers' Obstetrics*. He was a firm supporter of student sporting activities and particularly of the cricket club. Generations of Westminster men will remember the cricket matches he organised at Esher and the warm hospitality that followed them at the manor house. He was a man of enormous energy and wide interests who had a firm belief in the precept of early to bed, early to rise, and those who were his juniors will remember that he arrived for his clinics at Queen Charlotte's long before the resident staff were about, and would be found in the residents' sitting-room being swept around by the cleaners.

He was a nephew of William Blair Bell, first president and one of the founders of the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists, and, like him, a dedicated college-man. He was a member of council as early as 1939 and sat on many of the college standing committees until he was made honorary treasurer in 1952 at a critical time in the college finances. He was indefatigable and irrepressible in his efforts to raise money for the building and equipment of the new college and was justly proud of the end result. If any one man can be said to have been the driving force behind the new college it was Arthur Bell, and the college is a fitting testimony to his devotion to the cause of obstetrics and gynaecology. This was recognised by his election to the presidency in 1960 and knighthood in 1963. Arthur Bell was above all a family man, and this was obvious in the warm and cheerful atmosphere of his home. His relaxations were gardening, fishing, tennis, and golf, and he was an excellent shot. He was an all-rounder in every sense and his death brings to an end a career successful in all its facets. He is survived by his wife Hilda, and by their three sons, two daughters, and thirteen grandchildren.—RDdeV.